

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 225

July 23, 1996, 3:09 pm
Page S-8504 Temp. Record

WELFARE REFORM RECONCILIATION/24-Month Consecutive Limit

SUBJECT: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 . . . S. 1956. Ashcroft substitute amendment No. 4942 to the Ashcroft amendment No. 4941, as amended.

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 37-62

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1956, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, will enact major welfare reforms. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program will be replaced with a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to the States. The TANF block grant will be capped through 2001. Time limits will be placed on individuals receiving TANF benefits. Overall, the growth in non-Medicaid welfare spending will be slowed to 4.3 percent annually. The bill originally included major Medicaid reforms, but most of those provisions were stricken when the bill was reported. Without those Medicaid reforms, welfare spending will still be reduced by \$61.4 billion over 6 years.

The Ashcroft amendment, as amended, would permit a State to impose sanctions on a family that received TANF benefits if an adult in that family failed to ensure that his or her minor dependent child attended school as required by the law of the State in which that child resided. Additionally, the amendment would permit a State to impose sanctions on a family that received TANF benefits if an adult in that family did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent and was not working to attain one, unless such adult in the judgment of an appropriate professional was deemed not to have the requisite capacity to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent.

The Ashcroft substitute amendment to the Ashcroft amendment would prohibit a State from giving TANF benefits to a family for more than 24 consecutive months if that family included an adult who was not working and who was an adult during those 24 months. A State would be permitted to exempt up to 20 percent of its TANF caseload from this requirement.

NOTE: Following the vote, the underlying amendment, as amended, was adopted by voice vote.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

(See other side)

YEAS (37)			NAYS (62)			NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (36 or 69%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)		Republicans (16 or 31%)	Democrats (46 or 98%)		Republicans (1)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Hollings	Bennett	Akaka	Johnston	Kassebaum- ⁴	
Ashcroft	Hutchison		Campbell	Baucus	Kennedy		
Bond	Inhofe		Chafee	Biden	Kerrey		
Brown	Kempthorne		Cohen	Bingaman	Kerry		
Burns	Kyl		DeWine	Boxer	Kohl		
Coats	Lott		Domenici	Bradley	Lautenberg		
Cochran	Lugar		Gorton	Breaux	Leahy		
Coverdell	McCain		Gregg	Bryan	Levin		
Craig	McConnell		Jeffords	Bumpers	Lieberman		
D'Amato	Murkowski		Mack	Byrd	Mikulski		
Faircloth	Nickles		Simpson	Conrad	Moseley-Braun		
Frahm	Pressler		Snowe	Daschle	Moynihan		
Frist	Roth		Specter	Dodd	Murray		
Gramm	Santorum		Stevens	Dorgan	Nunn		
Grams	Shelby		Thomas	Exon	Pell		
Grassley	Smith		Warner	Feingold	Pryor		
Hatch	Thompson			Feinstein	Reid		
Hatfield	Thurmond			Ford	Robb		
				Glenn	Rockefeller		
				Graham	Sarbanes		
				Harkin	Simon		
				Heflin	Wellstone		
				Inouye	Wyden		

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

We need to change welfare from a condition in which people live to a transition from which people go; a transition from dependency to independence. Under this bill we will allow people to spend 5 straight years on the welfare rolls without working. That period of time is too long. If a muscle is not used for 5 weeks it gets weak. If it is not used for 5 months it atrophies. If it is not used for 5 years it disappears and is forever useless. Allowing individuals to avoid work for 5 years will do tremendous damage to their self-esteem, skills, and motivation. The Ashcroft amendment would leave the lifetime limit of 5 years in place, but it would impose a 24-month consecutive limit as well. Someone could be on welfare for 2 years and then get a job, and a few years later could lose that job and again go on welfare for another 2 years. The proposition advanced by the Ashcroft amendment is simple and meritorious: able-bodied individuals should not be allowed to be on welfare for 5 years without working. We urge the adoption of this amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

The Ashcroft amendment would aim at the parent and would hit the child. The underlying bill will already require parents to work within 2 years of receiving cash benefits, but it will also block States from sanctioning families with children under the age of 11 if they can prove the unavailability of child care. This amendment will not. Under the Ashcroft amendment, adults who try to find work but who are unable to will be thrown off welfare at the end of 2 years. Perhaps if the amendment required the State to provide a job at the end of 2 years and to provide day care, we would be able to support this amendment, but it does not, so we urge its rejection.